

On the Need for a New Life Movement

Chiang Kai-shek

In 1934, Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of China, heralded the New Life Movement which was to rally the Chinese people against the Communists and build up morale in a nation that was besieged with corruption, factionalism, and opium addiction. Here we see an attempt to revitalize what was seen by Chiang as the "essence" of being Chinese.

Why is a New Life Needed?

The general psychology of our people today can be described as spiritless. What manifests itself in behavior is this: lack of discrimination between good and evil, between what is public and what is private, and between what is primary and what is secondary. Because there is no discrimination between good and evil, right and wrong are confused; because there is no discrimination between public and private, improper taking and giving [of public funds] occur; and because there is no distinction between primary and secondary, first and last are not placed in the proper order. As a result, officials tend to be dishonest and avaricious, the masses are undisciplined and calloused, the youth become degraded and intemperate, the adults are corrupt and ignorant, the rich become extravagant and luxurious, and the poor become mean and disorderly. Naturally it has resulted in disorganization of the social order and national life, and we are in no position either to prevent or to remedy natural calamities, disasters caused from within, or invasions from without. The individual, society and the whole country are now suffering...